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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BUDAPEST 002808

STATE FOR EUR/NCE MICHELLE LABONTE

E.O. 12958: N/A

BODY

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PTER, HU

SUBJECT: RESS COVERAGE ON ALLEGED CIA PRISONS IN HUNGARY

1. SUMMARY: HUNGARIAN PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA ON BOTH NOVEMBER 3 AND 4 EXTENSIVELY COVERED THE WASHINGTON POST'S ARTICLE OF NOVEMBER 2 REPORTING ON ALLEGED SECRET PRISONS IN THAILAND, AFGHANISTAN, AND EASTERN EUROPE. IN THE MAJORITY OF THE NATIONAL DAILIES IT WAS FRONT-PAGE NEWS ON BOTH DAYS. ALL MEDIA OUTLETS QUOTED LEADING HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, SUCH AS PRIME MINISTER FERENC GYURCSANY, MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND HEAD OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY CABINET FERENC JUHASZ, AND GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON BOGLAR LASZLO AS CATEGORICALLY DENYING THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH PRISONS AND ALSO DENYING THAT THE USG HAD REQUESTED THAT THE HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT ESTABLISH A PRISON. END SUMMARY.

IMPOSSIBLE AND ABSURD"

2. THE STATE SECRETARY IN CHARGE OF CIVILIAN SECRET SERVICES, ANDRAS TOTH, WAS WIDELY QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE IDEA OF SECRETLY ACCEPTING PRISONERS WAS "IMPOSSIBLE AND ABSURD." THE INTERIOR MINISTRY, THE JUSTICE MINISTRY, AS WELL AS THE FOREIGN MINISTRY CONFIRMED TO NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY MTI THAT THEY HAD NO INFORMATION SUGGESTING THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD MADE SUCH A REQUEST THROUGH THEIR MINISTRIES. SPEAKING TO OPPOSITION, RIGHT-OF-CENTER NATIONAL DAILY MAGYAR NEMZET, NATIONAL COMMANDER OF HUNGARY'S PENITENTIARY SYSTEM ISTVAN BOKONYI DENIED THE EXISTENCE OF ANY SUCH PRISON IN HUNGARY, AND SAID THAT THERE BEEN NO REQUEST

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OR INITIATIVE TO SET UP ONE.
STOPOVER IN BUDAPEST?

3. TOP-CIRCULATION, CENTER-LEFT DAILY NEPSZABADSAG CARRIED THE STATEMENT OF A DANISH GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL SAYING THAT, IN SPITE OF DENMARKS REQUEST, CIA WAS USING THE DANISH AIRSPACE FOR FLIGHTS "VIOLATING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS", WITH THE DANISH OFFICIAL ADDING AS AN EXAMPLE THAT A PLANE WITH THE REGISTRATION NUMBER N168D, ON ITS WAY FROM ICELAND TO BUDAPEST, HAD CROSSED DANISH AIRSPACE. THE PLANE IS THE PROPERTY OF DEVON HOLDING AND LEASING, THE COMPANY THAT "AMERICAN PAPERS CONSIDER TO BE ONE OF THE SEVEN TRANSPORTATION COMPANIES CIA IS USING AS A COER FOR ITS FLIGHTS" THE PAER QUOTED THE DANISH OFFICIAL AS SAYING. NEPSZABADSAG CLAIMED TO HAVE FOUND OUT THAT NO SUCH REGISTRATION NUMBER EXISTED.

U.S. MARINES "DEPLOYED IN BUDA CASTLE"

4. ON NOVEMBER 3, OPPOSITION, RIGHT-OF-CENTER NATIONAL DAILY MAGYAR NEMZET USED THIS OPPORTUNITY TO NOTE THAT SPECULATIONS THAT HUNGARY COULD HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE VENUES FOR A SECRET CIA PRISON WERE SUPPORTED BY "THE SECRECY SURROUNDING THE AMERICAN FACILITIES IN HUNGARY." ONE SUCH FACILITY THE DAILY MENTIONED WAS THE MARINE HOUSE IN THE CASTLE DISTRICT OF BUDAPEST, WHICH, AS PART OF A POST-WW II RESTITUTION, HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE U.S.. MAGYAR NEMZET CLAIMED THAT, IN SPITE OF A LETTER SENT TO THE U.S. EMBASSY SOME MONTHS AGO REQUESTING MORE INFORMATION ON THE FACILITY, THEY HAD NOT YET RECEIVED ANY DETAILED INFORMATION "ON THE BASE." (EMBASSY COMMENT: THE EMBASSY HAS NO RECORD OF RECEIVING SUCH A LETTER. END COMMENT.)

"PLANE DID LAND, BUT WITHOUT PRISONERS"

5. ON NOVEMBER 4, NEPSZABADSAG CARRIED ON ITS FRONT PAGE A PHOTO OF AN AIRPLANE, WITH THE REGISTRATION NUMBER N168D CLEARLY VISIBLE ON ITS FUSELAGE. THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN BY A "SPOTTER" AT BUDAPEST'S FERIHEGY AIRPORT. NEPSZABADSAG AS WELL AS LEFT-OF-CENTER NEPSZAVA QUOTE THE GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON ADMITTING THAT THE PLANE IN QUESTION DID LAND IN BUDAPEST ON OCTOBER 3, BUT CARRIED NO PRISONERS. AFTER A NIGHT SPENT IN A BUDAPEST HOTEL, ITS 5-MEMBER CREW CONTINUED THEIR FLIGHT IN THE DIRECTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST. THE

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BUDAPEST STOPOVER WAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS, AND THE HUNGARIAN BORDER GUARDS DID CHECK THE PLANE. NEPSZABADSAG NOTES THAT THE SAME AIRPLANE HAS ALSO BEEN PHOTOGRAPHED IN PRAGUE, ON MALTA AND IN PORTUGAL. OPPOSITION, RIGHT-OF-CENTER MAGYAR NEMZET QUOTED BRITISH DAILY, THE GUARDIAN, RECALLING THAT THE AMERICANS HAD CONDUCTED POLICE AND MILITARY TRAINING AT THE "FORMER SOVIET AIRBASE" IN TASZAR, HUNGARY.

"NEIGHBORS MAY HAVE THEM"

6. THE HUNGARIAN MEDIA REPORT IN DETAIL THE SPECULATIONS ACCORDING TO WHICH SECRET CIA "BLACK SETTLEMENTS" MIGHT BE LOCATED IN ROMANIA (AT KOGALNICEANU AIRPORT) AND/OR POLAND (SZYMANY MILITARY AIRPORT). THEY HAVE ALSO MENTIONED THAT THE CZECH

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REPUBLIC ADMITTED THEY HAD RECEIVED A U.S. REQUEST A MONTH AGO TO HOLD IN THEIR PRISONS PRISONERS WHO HAD TURNED OUT NOT TO BE LINKED TO AL-QAIDA. PRAGUE REFUSED THE AMERICAN REQUEST. AT THE SAME TIME, HUNGARIAN PAPERS REPORT THAT SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN SLOVAKIA, POLAND, ROMANIA, RUSSIA AND BULGARIA CLEARLY AND UNANIMOUSLY HAVE DENIED HOLDING FOREIGN PRISONERS ON THEIR SOIL UPON A U.S. REQUEST.

WALKER

ADMIN

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